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Seeds of a New Economy? A Qualitative Investigation of Diverse Economic Practices Within Community Supported Agriculture and Community Supported Enterprise

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Abstract
Amidst widespread feelings that capitalism is a deeply problematic yet necessary approach to economy, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has emerged as both an alternative model for farming and as an increasingly visible and viable model for alternative economy. Using qualitative methods, this doctoral research explores and documents how CSA has become a productive space for economic innovation and practice that emphasizes interdependence, camaraderie and community well-being rather than hierarchical control and private gain. This study also examines how the many participants of CSA have built an identity for CSA--branding it via autonomous and collective efforts. This has resulted in CSA being branded as an ethical and ecological farm/food system and has also

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resulted in CSA being celebrated as a grassroots anti-brand owned and controlled by no-one. As CSA has built its identity, it has engaged a number of narratives and myths. Many of these myths such as the ability for CSA to educate about and build enthusiasm for small scale organic farming have been solidly validated over CSA's history. Other myths, such as the idea that CSA inherently provides financial security for CSA farmers are more troubling and yet to be fully realized. Finally, this study also makes an overview of CSA offshoots, a variety of Community Supported Enterprises (CSE) that have grown out of and been inspired by CSA. These enterprises represent a new wave of opportunities and challenges to building economic alternatives based on the ethical principles expressed by CSA.

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